



**Dirt: Adventures in Lyon as a chef in training,
father, and sleuth looking for the secret of French
cooking**

Bill Buford

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Bill Buford turns his inimitable attention from Italian cuisine to the food of France. Baffled by the language, but convinced that he can master the art of French cooking--or at least get to the bottom of why it is so revered-- he begins what becomes a five-year odyssey by shadowing the esteemed French chef Michel Richard, in Washington, D.C. But when Buford (quickly) realizes that a *stage* in France is necessary, he goes--this time with his wife and three-year-old twin sons in tow--to Lyon, the gastronomic capital of France. Studying at L'Institut Bocuse, cooking at the storied, Michelin-starred La Mère Brazier, enduring the endless hours and exacting *rigueur* of the kitchen, Buford becomes a man obsessed--with proving himself on the line, proving that he is worthy of the gastronomic secrets he's learning, proving that French cooking actually derives from (*mon dieu!*) the Italian.

Dirt: Adventures in Lyon as a chef in training, father, and sleuth looking for the secret of French cooking Details

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Diane S ? says

I love foodie books. For some reason I find them comforting. I love to cook, but like my food to look and taste what it actually is, so I'm not a big experimenter. Not adventurous in my food choices. It is interesting for me to read about those who are, those so passionate about cooking that they willingly work 12-16 hour days for temptuous and irascible chefs. So definitely not me.

In this book Buford is both the story and the one reporting on the story. Told that only in France can he actually learn to cook French, he uproots his family, wife and a young set of twin boys and sets out for Lyons. I'd like to add that I consider his wife both a saint and a miracle worker. So, we as readers are treated to the history of Lyons, their food and we meet some very different chefs. It is humorous, love the authors' sometime self-deprecating asides, and find out how a family survives in a foreign country. Quirks and all. This was fun, interesting and a joy to read.

ARC from Edelweiss.

Anne Bogel says

In his new memoir, foodie, food writer, and former New Yorker fiction editor Buford shares another first-hand account of his time in the kitchen. In a quest to deepen his culinary training, Buford and his wife, wine expert Jessica Green, move to France with their twin three-year-old boys. They intended to stay for six months so Buford could cook, but after settling in Lyon they extended their visit—and stayed for five years. A lush, detailed, and vividly drawn account of esteemed French kitchens, and the culture that makes their grand food possible.

Audiophile alert: I LOVED the audio version Buford narrates himself. He does an excellent job reading his own work.

Nigel says

In brief - guess I'll make this 3 star but only just. At times very interesting and at times definitely not...

While not able to speak French, Bill Buford decides he wants to learn the art of French cooking in France and preferably at what may be seen as the centre of it - Lyon. The book is the story of his journey. Initially he manages to convince a French chef working in New York to give him an opportunity. Fairly quickly it becomes apparent that this will not satisfy Bill. However, as someone who is primarily an author and journalist, can he really convince professional chefs in France to give him a chance? He moves with his wife and two young children to France.

The start of this book is really very foodie indeed. Indeed one of my first comments is that he is not quite as inexperienced as I had originally thought. He has already spent time in Italy learning to cook. I found the personal aspects of this part of the book quite interesting. However there was a fair amount of name dropping of famous chefs - I began to feel I might not be the target audience for this book.

After his arrival with his family in France however it improved for me. If anything it became even more about Michelin starred chefs but despite that I became more interested. I also started to learn things. I for one didn't know the variations of the word for "chicken" that exist in French for example. He watches boudin noir being made at a local farm in the traditional way. This will not be to everyone's tastes - veggies

particularly be wary - interesting nonetheless in the sense of culture and tradition. He persuades his local baker to allow him to work there. I really enjoyed his time with Bob the baker. It illustrates very well just how deeply embedded bread is in the minds of the people of France. After that he manages to get a leading culinary school to allow him into the classes. This brings in discipline and simply doing things properly. There is perfection with omelets and fish. Parts of this book should definitely not be read when you are hungry!!

From here he gets a leading Lyon restaurant to employ him. I found this in parts fascinating and in parts terrible. I am sure many of us are aware of the way people behave in restaurant kitchens however there are graphic illustrations of bad behaviour here. The author himself is guilty of something that I find very annoying - persistent lateness. He continues to turn up late letting down his colleagues - infuriating. I think his wife deserves a medal (& maybe more credit for her part in this story allowing him to work 80 hours a week while she looked after the children). On balance I find the author rather unappealing.

Indeed my comments so far illustrate how I felt during this book. I was interested, infuriated, fascinated and amazed by the silly behaviours. On the plus side there were some wonderful vignettes on life in France, its culture and cuisine. I loved the fascination with bread and flour. I found some of the author's diversions into the history of French cuisine somewhat boring and ended up skipping parts. His throwaway line about the quality of French coffee is simply silly - I have had some excellent coffees in France and I have had some bad ones. To dismiss French coffee in the way he does does him a disservice.

I am still unsure how to actually rate this book at the time of writing this. In part I have no idea who it is actually aimed at. True chefs are unlikely to find it that interesting; us mere mortals will almost certainly be disinterested by parts of it. I don't regret reading it - Bob alone makes it almost worthwhile - however I'm not sure I can recommend it.

Note - I received an advance digital copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair review
<https://viewson.org.uk/non-fiction/di...>

From Reader Review Dirt: Adventures in Lyon as a chef in training, father, and sleuth looking for the secret of French cooking for online ebook

From reader reviews:

Ruth Nicholson:

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